



WEEKLY MONITORING

10 June 2011

Headlines

[Parliamentary round up](#)

[Sector round up](#)

[Look ahead](#)

[Consultations and inquiries](#)

Lloyds Banking Group releases details of their latest housing price index. House prices in the three months from March to May were 1.2% lower than in the preceding three months. The average UK house price in May of £160,519 was 1.4% lower than in December 2010 on a seasonally adjusted basis. On an annual basis, prices in May were 4.2% lower. House sales remain subdued - the number of properties sold in the first four months of 2011 was 5% lower than in the same period last year - 279,000 against 293,000. The number of mortgages approved April were 2% higher in the three months from February to than in the preceding three months.

On Thursday the Bank of England announced that they would hold interest rates at 0.5%.

Neil Bentley, Deputy Director-General, CBI, wrote in Monday's Daily Telegraph: *"If we want economic growth, we must build more houses.* Read the article [here](#)

The Localism Bill had its 2nd Reading in the House of Lords

The Government launched a drive to build up to 100,000 new homes on surplus government land which will be sold off to developers using "buy now, pay later" schemes. Ministers have spent months compiling a database of all publicly-owned land which is surplus to immediate requirements, which is expected to be published tomorrow. The first tranches are understood to include a site in Hemel Hempsted, Herts, owned by the Crown Estate; a former hospital site in Basingstoke, Hants; a housing estate scheduled for demolition in Tower Hamlets, east London; a brownfield site part-owned by Network Rail in Northampton, and a former colliery in Rushcliffe, Notts.



Parliamentary round up

The Localism Bill had its 2nd Reading in the House of Lords. Communities Minister Baroness Hanham said that the Government will continue to listen and make amendments to the Bill: *“As we start our considerations, I can assure noble Lords that the Government will continue to listen and, where possible, make amendments that are justified and supported across the House.”* The Labour Party reaffirmed its commitment to further strengthen the duty to cooperate, to clarify the definition of sustainable development, and to get clause 124 (allowing financial considerations to be taken into account when considering planning applications) removed from the Bill. Lord MacKenzie of Luton led on the planning side of the Bill for the Opposition. English Heritage chair Baroness Andrews (Lab) also said she had *“grave concerns”* about clause 124: *“We have for the first time in planning legislation an explicit priority given to financial incentives in the planning system. This is a major distortion of what planning is there to do.”* Lords Committee Stage begins on 20 June. The full transcript of the 6-hour debate is available [here](#).

Communities Minister Lady Hanham answered a question from Lord Whitty on increasing the supply of affordable rented accommodation in the private and social housing sectors. The answer can be read in full [here](#).

Work and Pensions Minister Lord Freud answered a question on the discretionary housing payment. The answer can be read in full [here](#).

The Communities and Local Government Select Committee published the findings of an inquiry into localism, criticising the “inconsistency and incoherence” in the Government’s approach. The report says that there is no clear definition of localism, and it is not being applied coherently across departments. The report can be downloaded [here](#)

NHBC were mentioned when CLG Minister responded to a question on private and public sector housing starts. His response cited figures produced by NHBC. The answer can be read in full [here](#)

Sector round up

The Strategic Forum for Construction's water subgroup is published its action plan for reducing water usage on construction sites. The action plan is based on three principal ideas: value for money, the work environment, and habit. The plan can be downloaded [here](#)

The Government has published the Natural Environment White Paper, which includes proposals to give communities new powers to designate protected green areas as part of local neighbourhood plans. The White Paper can be accessed [here](#)

Decentralisation Minister Greg Clark MP has announced a technical revision to Annex B of Planning Policy Statement 3, to make clear that Affordable Rent falls within the definition of affordable housing for planning purposes.



Look Ahead

Date	Stakeholder	Issue
20.06.11	Parliament	Lords: Localism Bill Committee stage begins
20.06.11	Parliament	Commons: CLG Oral Questions
19.07.11 – 05.09.11	Parliament	Whitsun Recess
10.9.11 (latest date)	CLG	Government Response to CLG Committee Localism Report

Consultations and Inquiries

Title	Dept	Deadline
Planning for traveller sites: Consultation	CLG	06.07.11